

CHALLENGES for a *office-going* ~~working~~ mother

As International Mother's Day just went by, here's a look at the challenges of an office-going mother and how she can maintain a balance by planning well and honing her skills



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According to an African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Make that two, for mothers who have full-time jobs as well. This is not to say that non office-going mothers have any less responsibilities. In fact, they have to deal with far more expectations. Just that office-going mothers have more touch points to manage, higher level of dependencies on others and Murphy's law thrown in more often than for any other set of human species.

The biggest challenge women face today is to be judged. Unfortunately, most of them try to defend their position, when they don't need to. As grown up, educated and evolved individuals, you need not justify your decisions and choices to all and sundry all the time because it leads to a vicious cycle of guilt, self doubt, defiance and anger.

Sample this – you have a child with viral fever at home

and a critical presentation to be made at work. Of course, we all know what is important, but in practical life you weigh your options and then take a decision. On most such occasions, you would find someone to step in at home while you get the presentation out of the way and come back to your baby. You have taken a conscious and informed decision, but the world will not let you live it down and make you believe that your priorities are all wrong. This is the point which decides how challenging your life is going to be – will you let the cacophony get you down or shrug it off and move on to



BEAT THE CHALLENGES:

- Delegate and trust**
Enlist help and let them be
- Prioritise and plan**
Distinguish important from mundane
- Rules and review**
Set boundaries and ensure compliance

the next challenge?

While the working hours concept is changing around the world, we often perceive long working hours as a testimony of hard work, and it is detrimental for mothers of young children. It doesn't matter if you come in early, take no coffee/ smoke breaks, and gobble lunch as you work through a complex algorithm. If you do so much to attempt leaving on the dot, you get judged for being a slacker. This is the point when you let the said and unsaid office gossip get you down or shrug it off and walk away knowing you delivered your goals.

While some parenting experts suggest we do one thing at a time and do it well – be the corporate slayer at work or a full-time mom at home, it might make sense to change the strategy. In today's times of involved parenting and advanced technology, one can be a mother and corporate

honcho in the same breath.

You need not compartmentalise when you can empower yourself to bring in quality to all your roles. On a light day at office, you can actually step out and surprise your children by taking them for lunch or picking them from school. Similarly, you can get your office work in order at night when the kids are watching TV at home. By keeping timelines a little flexible, you can achieve quality outputs and juggle your roles more effectively. Yes, you need good planning skills, a sharpened foresight and agility to tackle the many roles you play in a day – you can hone these skills with practice and a little help from various tools available today. Most importantly, go easy on yourself. You know what is best for you and trust your instincts. Like someone said – what others think of you is none of your business!